

## Morrison Lake Water Quality update

The Lake Partner Program which measures spring phosphorus levels and water clarity throughout the season continued in 2019. Our results continue to be relatively good news. Phosphorus at all 3 test locations is under 10ug/l putting us in the category of 69% of Muskoka's lakes – low nutrient level. Above 10ug/l moves us into the medium nutrient group of 30% of Muskoka's lakes. Our 2019 nutrient level was higher than 2017 and 2018 – obviously not a trend we can be proud of. The 10-year average has been increasing from 8.5 in 2015 to 9.0 in 2019. How do we improve this?

Our better than predicted impacts from COVID-19 in Canada have been primarily due to the personal behaviour of each citizen. The protection and potential enhancement of our water quality and environment is exactly the same – our individual behavior impacts the lake.

Top of the list is to create and/or enhance your vegetative shoreline buffer:

- Filters runoff – rain that runs off the land can be slowed and will infiltrate into the buffer, which helps settle out sediment, nutrients and other pollutants before they reach the water.
- Absorbs nutrients – nutrients from fertilizers and septic systems are taken up by tree roots. Phosphorus and nitrogen will be stored in leaves, limbs and roots instead of reaching the water. Phosphorus is the main nutrient of concern in the lakes of Muskoka. (You are much too wise and responsible to still allow any fertilizer use, aren't you?)
- Protects banks from erosion – tree and shrub roots hold the bank soils together and stems protect banks by deflecting the cutting action of boat wakes, waves, and stormwater.
- Helps reduce the impacts from flooding and stormwater runoff – by slowing the velocity of runoff, the shoreline buffer allows the water to soak into the ground, and shoreline vegetation helps cycle water from the ground to the air through evapotranspiration.
- Encourages geese to stay off your property and instead contaminate those properties that still insist on having a “city lawn” at the lake!

### Discouraging Canada Geese:

The trick is to make your property less attractive to Canada geese by obstructing the shoreline and removing the short grass they feed upon. To accomplish this, stop mowing the grass along your shoreline. In no time, you'll have a vegetative buffer (a strip of vegetation along your shoreline) that Canada geese will no longer like to eat, and you will have removed their lake access. Studies are indicating that increased populations of Geese on lakes have a measurable impact.

To speed up the process, you can plant some native trees, tall coarse grasses, shrubs and wildflowers. Your buffer should be tall enough so that geese can't see over the plants and ideally be at least three metres wide. However, if your property doesn't allow for a buffer of this width, make it as wide as you can. Trees and shrubs along your shoreline can also help to frame your view of the lake while preventing your shoreline from eroding away.

For help on your shoreline re-naturalization project, check out The Natural Edge program through MWC and get advice, a planting plan for your property, and a Shoreline Re-naturalization Starter Kit for one low price! Love your lake has some great info <http://loveyourlake.ca/natural-shoreline/>

We all drive by Hidden Habitat at 2017 Southwood Rd. Laura Thomas has native species and advice to help. Check out the online store with plant kits and a shoreline kit.

<https://hiddenhabitat.square.site/product/on-the-water-shoreline-kit/95>

One of the best resources and a must for every cottage is the Living In Cottage Country book by the Muskoka Watershed Council. It is available from the MLRA for \$20, send us an email and we'll deliver your spiral bound book. <https://www.muskokawatershed.org/resources/handbook/>

For more information on the health of Muskoka Watershed see:

<https://www.muskokawatershed.org/programs/report-card/2018-report-card/2018-report-card-infographic/>